

MEETING SUMMARY
LAUREL HILL ADAPTIVE REUSE CITIZEN TASK FORCE MEETING
November 20, 2003 / 7:00 PM

Task Force Members Present: Tim Sargeant (Chair), Robert W. Cosgriff (Vice-Chair), Albert B. Akers, Beverly Cosham, Neal McBride, Irma A. Clifton, Penny Wilkinson, Sheila Coates, Jennifer Heinz

Task Force Members Absent: Phillip A. Niedzielski-Eichner, Douglas M. Wren, Dave Patten, Brian Scott Tishuk

Department of Planning and Zoning: Marianne Gardner, Charlene Fuhrman-Schulz, Linda Blank, Lindsay Mason

Fairfax County Public Schools: Gary Chevalier

Fairfax County Park Authority: Kelly Davis, John Pitts, Lynn Tadlock

EDAW: Paul Moyer

I. Review of November 6th Meeting

Tim Sargeant called the meeting to order and asked the Task Force members to review the meeting summary from November 6, 2003. Beverly Cosham made a motion to approve the summary. The motion was seconded by Albert Akers, and was passed unanimously.

II. Update on status of South County High School

Gary Chevalier, Fairfax County Schools Facilities Planning, reported on the status of the school sites at Laurel Hill. Construction on the 74-acre high school site has begun, and progress can be tracked on the Internet (<http://www.fcps.edu/fts/southcounty/constructionprogress.htm>). A public/private partnership has enabled the high school to be built 5 years earlier than would otherwise be possible, at a savings of \$25 million for the County. When completed (projected to open in 2005), the new school will likely open with 7th-10th grades as a small secondary school with approximately 2,300 students. Schools try not to relocate juniors and seniors to new schools due to established sports teams and other concerns. As it graduates into a full high school (grades 9-12), the new school will have a capacity of 2,500 students.

Plans for the middle school will be included in the new CIP which is scheduled to be released in another week. However, it is not expected to be built for another 5+ years. As for the elementary school, since a 10-room addition was just completed on Silverbrook Elementary, it is not expected to be built for several more years.

Question from Task Force member to Gary Chevalier: Do you see any problems that would prevent the High School from opening on time?

Answer: The weather may affect the schedule. If we have a normal winter it should be fine.

Question: What are the vehicle trips for a school of this size?

Answer: It will be fairly intense because there is not much walking population in the vicinity. For the first few years it will be mostly buses.

Question: How do you calculate high school parking needs? Will parking be allowed on Silverbrook Road?

Answer: Number of spaces needed is based on capacity. There will be some flexibility with parking on a large site like this is. Don't anticipate that parking will be allowed on Silverbrook.

Question: Will building be a replica of the Westfield school, the corporate appearance?

Answer: It won't look exactly like Westfield, but will be similar. The bricks to be used match what is currently in the area. It will have a brick portico – attempting to match the surroundings.

Question: Will there be interim uses of the middle and elementary school sites? Are there plans for fields and other park uses in interim?

Answer: No specific plans are in place at the moment, but we work with the Park Authority all the time so it should be no problem to work something out.

Tim Sargeant requested data regarding vehicle trips associated with the new high school. Mr. Chevalier said he would locate and forward the data to the Task Force.

III. Update on building stabilization efforts for Laurel Hill

Marianne Gardner, Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ), provided information about the County's efforts to stabilize historic structures at Laurel Hill. The short-term priorities are to stop rain from coming in, and second to weatherize and control humidity levels in the buildings to prevent deterioration. John Milner & Associates is conducting an assessment to determine the costs and needs of long-term stabilization. As soon as the estimate is available and a contract is agreed on staff will report back to the Task Force.

Al Akers to Marianne: It was my understanding that the County would give a report that would show building by building what is needed?

Marianne: That is what the assessment should enable us to provide.

Tim Sargeant: For the record, we received a letter about this same issue from the Lorton Arts Foundation, requesting that "...the Task Force ask Fairfax County to maintain these buildings to the level of which they deserve in accordance with customary preservation standards." L.A.F requested that "...the more severe roof leaks be repaired and a primer applied to all exterior woodwork."

IV. Presentation on the proposed Architectural Review Board Standards and Guidelines for Laurel Hill

Richard Bierce, Chairman of the Architectural Review Board (ARB) and Linda Blank, DPZ Historic Preservation Planner, described and answered questions about the draft ARB Standards and Guidelines for Laurel Hill that had been distributed to the Task Force members. To mitigate the potential impact of the transfer of the prison property to Fairfax County the Memorandum of Agreement between the federal government and Fairfax County included a provision that a portion of the site would become a Fairfax County historic district. The 552 acre historic district is under the oversight of the ARB. The County standards for historic districts are articulated in Article 7 of the Zoning Ordinance. Although not currently designated as a national historic district, it will be regulated as if it is on the National Register.

Mr. Bierce explained that the ARB is not just a preservation board, but is equally a design review board. The guidelines developed are not law or a formula, but are meant to assist everyone by keeping them on the same page. The standards and guidelines are meant to facilitate and challenge designers. Because all buildings are unique, the standards and guidelines should be flexible and applied judiciously. New development and site design will be a critical part of the adaptive reuse of the site, and the ARB anticipates that flexibility in the guidelines will be important. In order to make the site work, Bierce acknowledged that change will be necessary.

Question from Neal McBride: Is there a way to know which of the guidelines are basic or standard for any historic site?

Answer: These are based on other standards and guidelines that have been developed, but each is unique to the architecture, structures, landscapes and history of the specific site. The Secretary of Interior standards underlie everything.

Question from Neal McBride: Does the Lorton Prison Historic District extend to the Nike missile site?

Answer: It is not currently part of the district, and would have to be formally nominated for inclusion. It could also be part of a separate nomination.

Ms. Blank concluded by saying that the Task Force review of and comments on the draft guidelines and standards are very important to promote a clear understanding of how buildings will be treated among all the interested parties. Park Authority staff and the ARB will also review the draft. Comments must be submitted by December 4th. Task Force members should submit their comments to Tim Sargeant by December 1, 2003, who will compile them to send to Linda Blank by December 4th. Next steps will be determined at a later date.

V. Presentation by Fairfax County Park Authority on the parks master planning process at Laurel Hill

Kelly Davis and John Pitts of the Park Authority presented the latest draft of the Conceptual Development Plan for Laurel Hill Park. There has been extensive public involvement in the process of developing the plan. The plan places different uses on different focus areas of the park property, including:

- Neighborhood park
- Conservation area
- Community park/environmental focus area
- Golf course
- Cold War Heritage Area
- Recreation Fields
- Arts and Culture focus area
- Equestrian center
- Sports complex, and
- RV Camping.

Question from Neal McBride: Why are the 300 acres of the Vulcan Quarry (which was part of the land swap with the Federal government) and the landfill area not included in the Park's plans?

Answer: The quarry site will be taken into consideration for inclusion in the plan. The landfill site has not yet been given to the Park Authority by the County. If and when it is, it can be incorporated into the plan. The plan will be revised over the years, and when the landfill becomes usable, it will likely be designated for low-impact uses like kite flying areas and hiking trails.

After the Park Authority Board approves the Final Development Plan, it will go through the Planning Commission's 2232 process to ensure that it is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. Actual development will occur when/as the money become available, through bonds, partnership opportunities, etc.

Suggestions from the Task Force:

- Include African American history component
- Construct an interpretive site illustrating different points or eras in Fairfax County history
- Coordinate access and trails, interconnected with other trails in area and existing networks

Question from the Task Force: What is the status of the Laurel Hill house?

Answer: Building requires upgrading and renovation. It is a feature the Park Authority would like to make available to the public. The Park Authority role in this effort is not clear.

John Pitts then described the status of the proposed Lorton Road realignment in the Park Authority's Plan. As it currently is shown in the Comprehensive Plan, the new Lorton Road would bisect a large portion of parkland and can be widened to 6 lanes if demand warrants it. This is not compatible with the plans for the park, which would maintain the current rural and historic atmosphere. Park Authority staff's recommendation would include support of the suggested realignment, but reducing the design speed and exploring ways to reduce the intensity and visual impact.

At a recent meeting, the Park Authority Board instructed staff to return to the drawing board to come up with additional alternatives to lesson the impact of the road on the Park. They also requested that staff research the possibility of requesting a Plan amendment to change the

recommendation for widening Lorton Road. Park staff will return to the PA Board on December 10, 2003, with its results.

Tim Sargeant noted that the Task Force will have final recommendations to share with the public in February, and asked whether the meetings with the Park Authority Board beforehand would be enough to work out all issues. Staff indicated that they are involved in each other's processes, and suggested that would be enough time to comment on the recommendations.

The meeting was adjourned.

The next Task Force meeting is scheduled for 7:00 p.m., Thursday, December 18, 2003, Room 232 at the Fairfax County Government Center.